GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HOME AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4437
ANSWERED ON:18.12.2001
INCIDENT OF ANTHRAX POWDER
S. JAGATHRAKSHAKAN;SUNDER LAL TIWARI;TARACHAND BHAGORA

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of anthrax powder cases have come into light in the country and the number of cases in which Anthrax virus is detected;

(b) whether security guidelines and instructions have been revised to effectively meet the threat of this kind of bio-terror; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (CH. VIDYASAGAR RAO)

(a): The National Institute of Communicable Diseases, Delhi, which has been identified as the nodal agency to receive envelops/packets suspected of Anthrax for testing, received 264 envelops till 18.11.2001. Testing in 258 cases has been completed and none of them was found positive for Anthrax. Such envelops, if received in the States, are being tested by the State Health authorities.

(b) and (c): The Government has issued a detailed circular to all States and Union Territories containing a list of biological agents used as weapons, along with signs and symptoms, likely method of dissemination, incubation period, lethality and the availability of vaccines, anti-microbial therapy and treatment. They have been requested to earmark maximum number of beds for emergency contingency, stocking of vaccines/sera/drugs to the extent possible and setting up of special teams of doctors for coordinated action. It has also been requested that these Teams should be sensitized on the impact of such weapons and treatment measures.

A general awareness campaign regarding Anthrax has been launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

In addition, all States/Union Territories have been sensitized to remain vigilant to the emerging threats to internal security and to have contingency plans in readiness to deal with any eventuality, including precautions against weapons of mass destruction.